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ABSTRACT

Conducted to obtain information for use in developing a revised five-year plan of library service for the state of Alabama, this study was designed to determine the priorities of the state's public libraries as perceived by librarians, chairpersons of library boards of trustees, and library users. Two survey instruments were designed and distributed, one for librarians and trustees and the other for patrons. The first questionnaire was sent to 194 public libraries, while 6,227 copies of the second were sent to 182 libraries serving discrete patron populations. The rates of return for the surveys were 54% from librarians, 38% from trustees, and 28% from patrons. Questions addressed to librarians and trustees covered: (1) activity area priorities; (2) service priorities; (3) service group priorities; (4) actions to increase patron use and/or satisfaction; (5) activity involvement and curtailment; (6) Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA), Title I, and local libraries; (7) LSCA, Title I, and statewide benefits; and (8) LSCA, Title III, and statewide benefits. In addition to demographic information and information on frequency of library use and need for library services, the questionnaire for patrons requested their perceptions of the quality of service, most needed services, services to discontinue, and the relative importance of 11 activities supported in part by federal funds. Data are presented in tables and graphs throughout the report, and a final table provides a comparison of the opinions of all three groups on the 11 federally supported activities. It is noted that trustees and librarians agreed with each other to a greater extent than either group does with patrons. (Author/RP)

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Alabama's Public Library As Seen By Patrons, Administrators and Trustees

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Executive Summary

By: Neal Kaske, Annabel Stephens and Philip Turner

June, 1986

The University of Alabama
Graduate School of Library Service
P.O. Box 6242
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Alabama's Public Libraries As Seen By
Patrons, Administrators and Trustees

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A research project conducted by the Alabama Public Library Service,
and funded in part by the Library Services and Construction Act.

BY: Neal Kaske, Annabel Stephens, Philip Turner

June 1986

The University of Alabama, Graduate School Of Library Service, P.O. Box 6242, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487

Executive Summary

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to determine the priorities for Alabama's public libraries as perceived by public library administrators, by chairpersons of library boards of trustees, and by library users.[1] An opinion survey of these three populations was conducted by the Graduate School of Library Service, University of Alabama, under contract with the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS), during March-May, 1986. The results of the survey will be used by APLS, along with other data and information, as that agency develops a revised five-year plan of service.

A ten-question instrument was designed and mailed to all 194 public libraries in Alabama to ascertain the opinions of the librarians and trustees. One hundred and five (105) librarians and 73 trustees completed the instrument. A variant of this questionnaire was mailed in multiple copies to the 182 public libraries with discrete patron populations. (The 12 omitted were either regional or county administrative headquarters located within an operating library but with no service functions of their own.) There were 1,766 usable returns, 28% of those mailed, for this patron opinion survey instrument.

Librarians and Trustees

The librarians and trustees responded virtually as one population. While there was some variation within each group, the correlation of responses between groups was significant each time it was calculated.

1. (Activity Area Priorities)

The first question sought a ranking of four activity areas as to priority for effort and resources in the respondent's library. The activity areas are defined to the right.

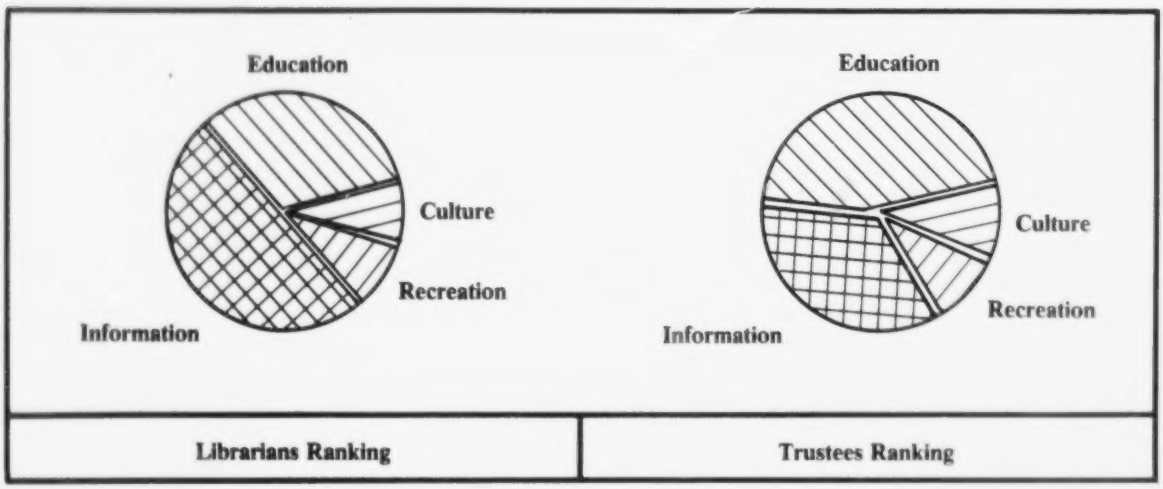
A. **Culture** (including appropriate programs and materials: e.g., art books, prints, great literature, classical records, displays, exhibits, etc.).

B. **Education** (including support of school or college programs, self-teaching materials, life-long learning, learning programs for the educationally disadvantaged, etc.).

C. **Information** (staff activities in the location of information and materials, information questions, information programming, reference collections, etc.).

D. **Recreation** (programs for entertainment, print and non-print materials for leisure use.).

Librarians ranked information first; trustees ranked education highest.



[1] It should be emphasized that this is a report on priorities and is not intended to be judgmental. The focus is not on the quality of present service but on the perceived needs for the future.

2. (Service Priorities)

The second question asked the respondents to rank four service areas as to priority for allocation of effort and resources in their libraries. The four service areas are defined to the right.

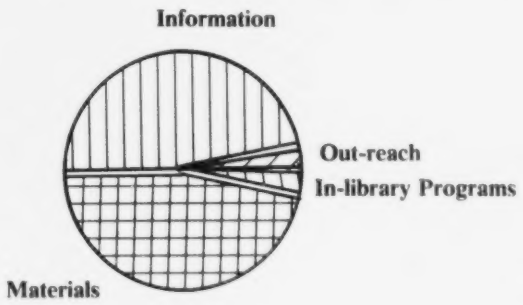
a. *Information services* (including reference, referral and other staff services aiding patrons in the use of materials or the securing of information).

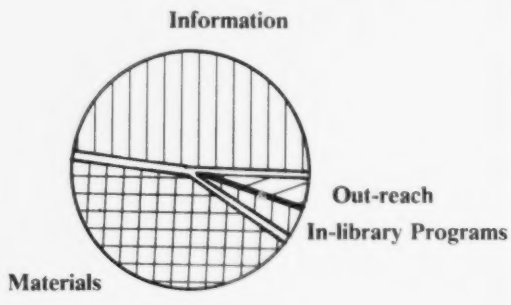
b. **Materials service** (including the selection, acquisition, processing, and circulation of print and non-print materials and their use in the library).

c. **In-library programming** (including all programs, exhibits, and displays for all age groups).

d. **Out-reach services** (to include bookmobile service, books-by-mail projects, programming outside the library such as visits to schools, speeches or programs for special groups, deposit collections, visits to the homebound, etc.).

Both groups ranked information services first, with materials service in close second place.



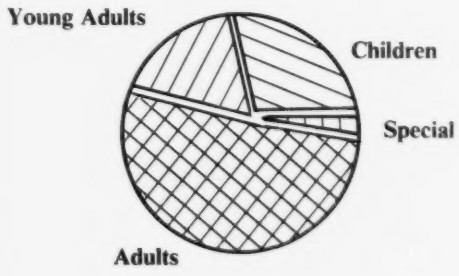


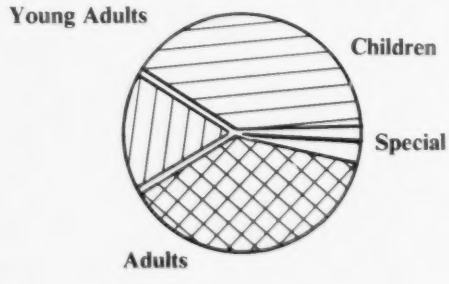
Librarians Ranking | **Trustees Ranking**

3. (Service Group Priorities)

A ranking of service groups was the next request. The four groups were children, young adults, adults, and special. Special groups were defined as the aging, homebound, handicapped, confined, minorities, businessmen, etc.

The librarians overwhelmingly favored adults, while trustees ranked adults and children evenly.





Librarians Ranking Service | **Trustees Ranking Service**

4. (Actions to Increase Patron Use and/or Satisfaction)

With this question, respondents were asked to rate 22 actions as to their potential for increasing their patrons' use and/or satisfaction with the library. Each action implied an enhancement of or an increase in a typical library activity or resource. Possible exceptions to the above are microcomputers for public use and access to on-line databases, which are not yet 'typical' in Alabama public libraries.

Actions	Extremely High	High	Moderate	Low	Not At All
A. More weekend hours of operation					
B. More weekday hours of service					
C. Added facilities					
D. Expanded bookmobile service					
E. More fiction books for adults					
F. More non-fiction books for adults					
G. More books for young adults					
H. More non-fiction books for young adults					
I. More fiction books for children					
J. More non-fiction books for children					
K. More reference books					
L. More periodicals					
M. More records, cassettes, films, and other non-print materials					
N. More books-by-mail					
O. More staff					
P. Expanded reference service					
Q. More library programs for adults					
R. More library programs for young adults					
S. More library programs for children					
T. More special services for the aging, handicapped, homebound, and confined					
U. Microcomputers for public use					
V. Access to on-line databases					
W. Other _____					
X. Other _____					

As will be noted in the table, there was close agreement between the librarians and the trustees, particularly on the top five ranks. The greatest disparity in ranking was a separation of five ranks, and this occurred for only two items. The six lowest ranked items are significantly separated from the other actions.

*RATINGS OF ACTIONS TO INCREASE PATRON USE/SATISFACTION**

Actions	Not at all		Low		Moderate		High		Extremely high		Mean		Rank	
	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L
Adult programs	1	1	2	7	26	30	44	30	21	31	2.84	2.80	1	2
Reference books	3	0	1	8	33	32	34	29	26	30	2.82	2.82	2	3
Child programs	1	2	11	8	18	26	43	39	23	21	2.79	2.74	3	4
Adult fiction books	0	3	4	7	36	24	41	32	16	31	2.72	2.85	4	1
Child fiction books	6	2	3	6	29	37	30	29	23	24	2.70	2.70	5	5
Child non-fiction books	3	2	6	9	33	37	33	29	21	21	2.67	2.60	8	7
Y/A non-fiction books	1	2	7	13	32	34	41	31	15	18	2.64	2.50	7	9
Facilities	4	12	11	9	30	23	23	25	29	25	2.63	2.42	8	12
Reference services	1	3	10	15	36	26	32	35	18	15	2.57	2.47	9	10
Adult non-fiction books	1	2	7	8	43	34	30	35	18	20	2.57	2.64	10	6
More staff	6	11	19	13	18	25	24	26	30	23	2.56	2.38	11	13
Periodicals	1	4	14	13	33	33	27	30	21	18	2.54	2.46	12	11
Non-print materials	3	4	11	16	37	23	25	29	20	27	2.51	2.59	13	8
Y/A library programs	1	4	18	22	30	35	36	26	12	11	2.41	2.19	14	15
Special services	4	5	15	22	36	43	26	19	15	9	2.34	2.10	15	17
Adult library programs	1	5	15	23	45	33	22	21	14	15	2.32	2.20	16	14
Weekend hours	15	24	14	22	37	28	21	18	11	8	1.99	1.63	17	21
Weekday hours	11	10	19	33	43	35	18	12	8	8	1.93	1.7	18	20
Public microcomputers	19	17	19	21	24	19	22	26	10	14	1.83	1.99	19	18
Access on-line	16	18	22	23	25	24	20	18	8	11	1.79	1.80	20	19
Books-by-mail	21	36	23	24	23	15	10	9	8	5	1.55	2.12	21	16
Bookmobile	33	44	14	10	18	20	14	6	7	6	1.39	1.06	22	22

* *Percentage of those responding in each area*

T = Trustees L = Librarian Not at all = 0 Extremely high = 4

5. & 6. (Activity Involvement and Curtailment)

The next two questions were designed to (a) determine if the respondent's library was involved in each of ten activities, (b) if decreased funding forced reductions in library expenditures, which three of the services should be curtailed, (c) of these, which one would be curtailed first.

Check all of the following activities in which your library is involved.

_____ **Purchases books for lending**

_____ **Purchases duplicates of books for lending**

_____ **Purchases films, records, cassettes, and/or other non-print materials for lending**

_____ **Provides reference and information service**

_____ **Provides in-library programs for preschool children**

_____ **Provides in-library programs for adults**

_____ **Provides public library programs in schools**

_____ **Provides out-of-library services for senior citizens, homebound, and handicapped**

_____ **Maintains branch libraries**

_____ **Offers bookmobile services**

If decreased funding forced reductions in library expenditures, which three of the above services should be curtailed? (Please circle these three services and also place an * by the one which should be reduced FIRST.)

The activity most vulnerable for curtailment and also designated most frequently as the first to be reduced was 'Purchase duplicates of books for lending.'

ACTIVITY INVOLVEMENT AND PRIORITY *

Activity	Involvement		First 3 Curtailed		First Curtailed	
	T	L	T	L	T	L
Purchase books for lending	88	94	4.1	5.7	0	3
Purchases duplicate books for lending	67	62	54.8	49.6	36	32
Purchases non-print materials for lending	73	74	30.2	36.3	10	8
Provides reference and information services	96	98	4.1	4.9	1	1.4
Provides in-library programs for preschool children	85	83	9.2	13.3	1.4	1.9
Provides in-library programs for adults	52	46	30.1	33.3	4.1	5.7
Provides public library programs in schools	27	27	32.9	27.1	12.3	17.7
Provides out-of-library services to special	48	48	15.1	12.5	1.4	1.9
Maintains branch libraries	22	23	13.7	6.7	2.7	0
Offers bookmobile services	23	23	17.8	16.2	5.5	5.7

*percentage of those responding in each area

T = Trustees L = Librarians

7. (LSCA, Title I, and Local Libraries)

Eleven areas that can receive funds from the Library Services and Construction Act (Title I) were defined...

Areas Without Service: Expansion of library services to geographical areas or groups with no library service.

Inadequate Service: Expansion of service to persons not receiving adequate services due to inadequacy of library resources.

Disadvantaged Persons: Extension of library service to persons defined as disadvantaged, that is: 'Disadvantaged persons' means persons whose socio-economic or educational deprivation or whose cultural isolation from the general community may preclude them from benefitting from public library services to the same extent as the general community benefits from these services.

Physically Handicapped: Extension of services to persons with physical handicaps defined as : 'Handicapped' means, for purposes of this program, mentally retarded, hearing impaired, speech impaired, visually handicapped, seriously emotionally disturbed, orthopedically impaired, or otherwise health impaired.

Institutions: Extension of public library services to individuals residing in institutions which are wholly or partially funded by state funds. Examples of such institutions are: correctional facilities, mental health institutions, homes for the aged, etc.

Major Urban Resource Libraries: Strengthening of library services for metropolitan libraries serving as regional resource libraries.

Limited English Speaking Ability: Service to individuals who: 1. (a) Were not born in the United States or whose native tongue is a language other than English; (b) Come from environments where a language other than English is dominant; (c) Are American Indian and Alaskan Natives and who come from environments where a language other than English has had a significant impact on their level of English language proficiency; and - 2. Because of the reason(s) listed in 1. (a), (b), or (c) or this definition, have sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language to be denied the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English or to participate fully in society.

Older Readers: Services to library users over 60.

Information/Referral: Extension of library services to develop community information centers to provide information and make referrals to link people in need of services to appropriate resources.

Literacy: Extension of library services to individuals with the inability to read, write, or make simple arithmetic computations.

Strengthening State Agency: Support for the administration and provision of state agency services.

and respondents were asked how such federal funds would benefit the population their libraries served.

There was concurrence between the trustees and librarians in the ranking of the top three and last four, with only a slight divergence for the four middle categories.

*BENEFITS OF FEDERAL FUNDING (TITLE I) TO POPULATION SERVED BY LIBRARY **

Category	Very high		High		Middle		Low		Very low		Mean		Rank	
	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L
Older readers	19	22	38	31	23	34	7	6	3	2	2.7	2.7	1	1
Inadequate service	26	33	26	24	18	21	11	11	7	7	2.6	2.6	2	2
Information/referral	18	21	38	28	22	30	8	13	6	5	2.6	2.5	3	3
Physical handicap	14	11	26	30	37	35	7	12	7	8	2.3	2.2	4	5
Strengthening State Agency	16	17	21	25	23	25	12	12	12	12	2.1	2.2	5	6
Disadvantaged persons	10	11	26	27	33	34	15	11	8	13	2.1	2.1	6	7
Areas w/o service	12	23	16	24	21	24	15	11	16	15	2.1	2.3	7	4
Literacy	14	13	15	19	27	35	21	17	12	11	1.9	2.0	8	8
Institutions	1	6	18	17	33	36	15	20	21	17	1.5	1.7	9	9
Major urban resource libraries	11	7	12	18	16	20	12	17	32	26	1.5	1.5	10	10
Limited English-speaking ability	3	2	3	3	14	16	25	33	41	36	.8	.9	11	11

T = Trustees L = Librarians

** percentage of those responding in each area*

8. (LSCA, Title I, and Statewide Benefits)

This time the respondents were asked how funding in the same 11 areas would benefit citizens of the entire state.

In comparing responses to questions 7 and 8, it will be seen that there is considerable agreement in the ranking of the areas for both local and statewide populations. Overall, however, both librarians and trustees saw a higher benefit to the state as a whole than to the local population from federal funds.

BENEFITS OF FEDERAL FUNDING (TITLE I) TO POPULATION OF ENTIRE STATE *

Category	Very high		High		Middle		Low		Very low		Mean		Rank	
	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L
Inadequate service	41	47	29	30	11	17	7	1	4	0	3.0	3.3	1	1
Areas w/o service	37	38	27	37	14	16	8	4	5	0	2.9	3.1	2	2
Older readers	22	29	44	39	16	23	7	5	1	1	2.8	2.9	3	4
Information/referral	25	35	39	34	18	17	7	8	4	2	2.7	2.9	4	3
Physical handicap	26	31	31	34	25	27	8	5	1	1	2.7	2.9	5	5
Strengthening State Agency	29	37	30	25	17	21	6	7	11	6	2.6	2.8	6	6
Disadvantaged persons	19	23	43	37	29	30	7	6	3	1	2.6	2.7	7	7
Literacy	22	31	23	25	29	29	14	11	6	2	2.4	2.7	8	8
Institutions	14	15	33	35	33	37	10	8	4	1	2.4	2.5	9	10
Major urban resource libraries	26	27	22	32	22	19	8	9	14	8	2.4	2.6	9	10
Limited English-speaking ability	11	10	12	18	30	37	27	24	10	5	1.8	2.0	11	11

** percentage of those responding in each area*

T = Trustees L = Librarians

9. (LSCA, Title III, and Local Libraries) *

Respondents were then asked to consider how federal funds from the Library Services and Construction Act (Title III) used to promote seven areas of interlibrary cooperation would benefit the population which their libraries served.

A. Planning for Multi-type Library Networks

B. Establishment and Operation of Automated Networks

C. Establishments and Operation of State Resource Centers

D. Establishment and On-going Publication of Union Lists

E. Establishment and On-going Publication of Union Catalogs

F. Establishment and Operation of Regional and/or Statewide Resource Centers

G. Reimbursement of Net Lenders for Interlibrary Loans

Twelve of the fourteen mean scores were at or above the middle ranking, but none was at or above the High category. It is apparent that the 'average' view by both of the groups of the benefit to their populations of these areas was between middle and high.

*BENEFITS OF FEDERAL FUNDING (TITLE III) TO POPULATION SERVED BY LIBRARY **

Category	Very high		High		Middle		Low		Very low		Mean		Rank	
	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L
State resource centers	19	10	36	40	19	30	10	11	1	4	2.8	2.4	1	3
Regional resource centers	21	23	29	29	22	27	14	11	1	4	2.6	2.6	2	1
Automated networks	19	24	27	22	23	28	11	10	6	8	2.5	2.4	3	2
Reimburse inter-library loan	34	23	23	33	14	21	4	8	18	10	2.3	1.9	4	6
Multitype library network	16	12	26	27	16	26	18	13	10	11	2.3	2.1	5	4
Establish and publish union catalog	8	11	25	29	29	28	16	19	6	10	2.1	2.0	6	5
Establish and publish union list of serials	7	13	18	12	26	32	26	24	8	11	1.8	1.8	7	7

** percentage of those responding in each area*

T = Trustees L = Librarians

10. (LSCA, Title III, and Statewide Benefits) *

When viewed from the perspective of statewide benefits, six of seven areas of interlibrary cooperation were viewed more favorably, with one, 'Establishment and Operation of Regional and/or Statewide Resource Centers,' remaining the same.

*BENEFITS OF FEDERAL FUNDING (TITLE III) TO POPULATION OF ENTIRE STATE **

Category	Very high		High		Middle		Low		Very low		Mean		Rank	
	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L	T	L
Regional resource centers	23	32	43	29	25	24	3	4	1	2	2.8	2.9	1	1
State resource centers	26	24	29	32	27	28	4	5	1	2	2.8	2.7	2	3
Automated networks	27	30	26	33	26	20	6	5	3	2	2.8	2.9	3	2
Reimburse inter-library loan	11	11	37	31	25	30	10	12	1	4	2.5	2.3	4	6
Multitype library networks	20	21	25	29	23	29	12	6	7	7	2.4	2.5	5	4
Establish and maintain union catalog	10	17	29	24	30	35	12	10	6	3	2.2	2.4	6	5
Establish and maintain union list of serials	8	17	22	14	34	37	14	18	8	3	2.1	2.2	7	7

** percentage of those responding in each area*

T = Trustees L = Librarians

* The construction of questions 9 and 10 on the librarians and trustees survey was flawed and results are consequently not definitive. In addition to 'Planning for Multitype Library Networks,' there should have also been listed 'Establishment and Operation of Multitype Library Networks.' There was also ambiguity introduced in the directions preceding the listing of the areas of cooperation.

Patrons:

The number of questionnaires distributed for patrons was based, in part, on the size of the population served by each libraary. The following table shows the number sent and returned by six population categories.

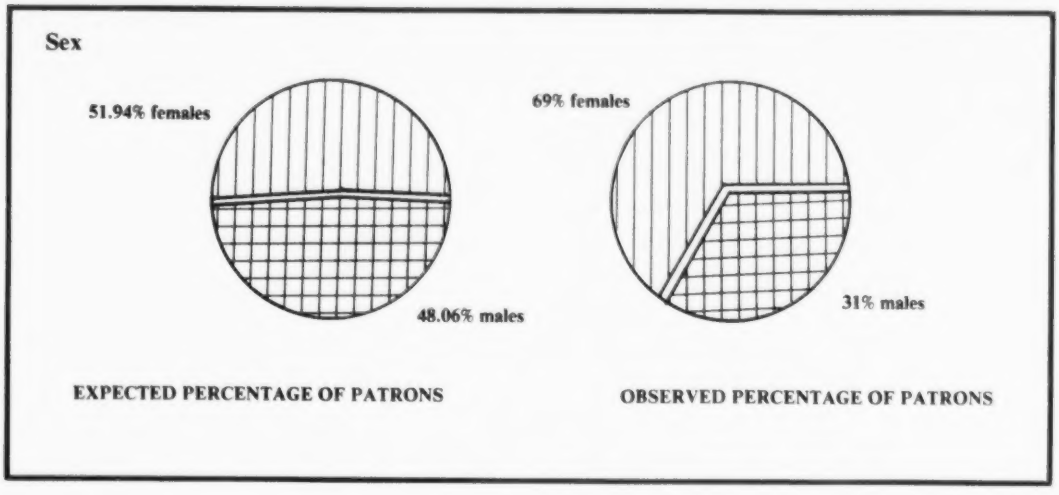
DISTRIBUTION OF PATRON QUESTIONNAIRES
SENT AND RETURNED BY POPULATION SERVED

Population Served	Questionnaires Sent	Percent Sent	Questionnaires Returned	Percent Returned
500,000 or more	950	15.27	407	23.0
250,000 - 499,999	313	5.03	163	9.2
100,000 - 249,999	828	13.30	177	10.0
50,00 - 99,999	429	6.89	157	8.9
10,000 - 49,999	1234	19.82	421	23.3
under 10,000	2473	39.71	450	25.5
Total	6227	100.02	1766	100.8

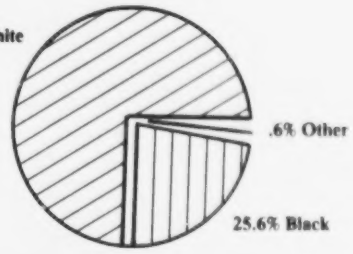
There was a larger percentage of returns representing the one library in the state serving a population of over 500,000 and a lower percentage for the 127 libraries serving populations of under 10,000.

1 - 4. (Patrons: Gender, Race, Education, and Age)

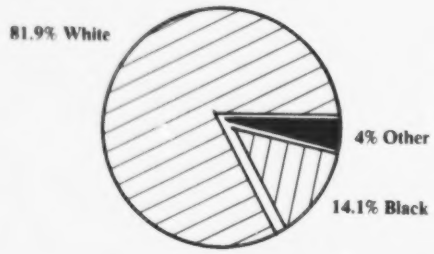
The first four questions of the 'Patron Opinion Survey' asked for demographic information. These data were sought to determine if adults using public libraries and completing the questionnaire were representative of the adult population of Alabama. They were not.



Race

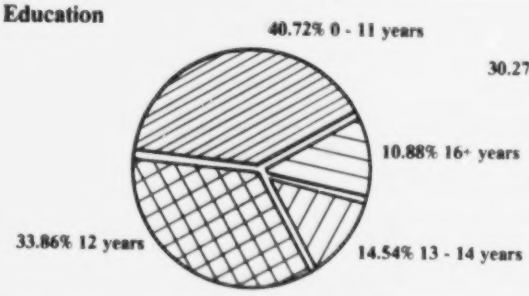


EXPECTED PERCENTAGE OF PATRONS

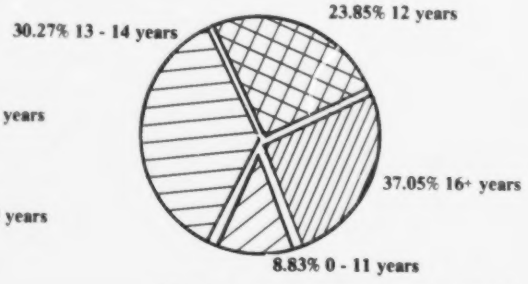


OBSERVED PERCENTAGE OF PATRONS

Education



EXPECTED PERCENTAGE OF PATRONS



OBSERVED PERCENTAGE OF PATRONS

Age

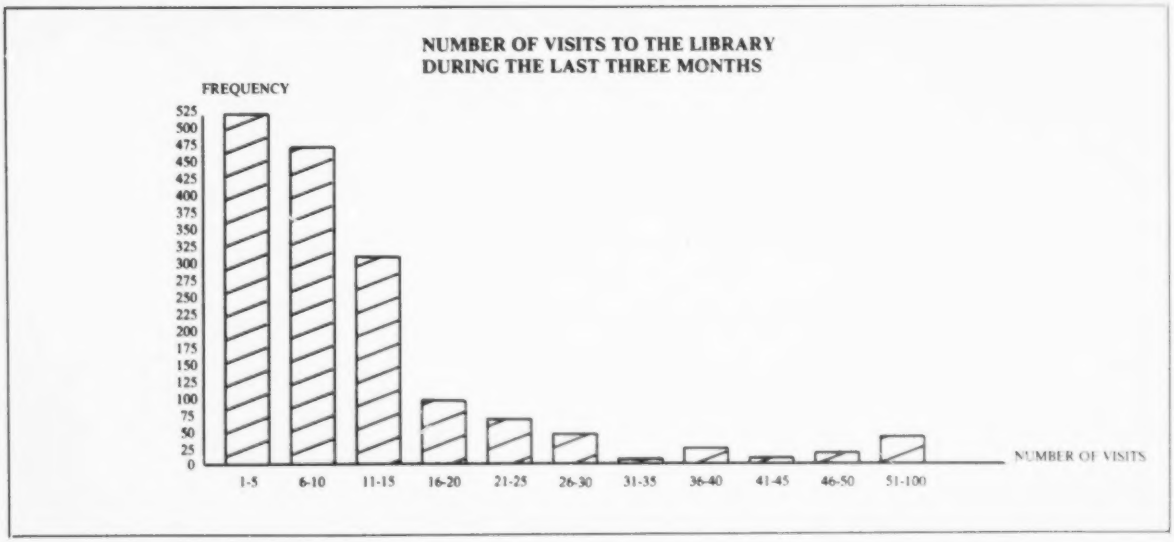
Distributions of Patrons By Age Groups
As Compared To The General Adult Population of Alabama

Age Group	General Public	Library Patrons
15 - 19	10.67	8.34
20 - 24	12.25	6.85
25 - 29	11.10	10.45
30 - 34	9.42	12.39
35 - 39	8.98	15.53
40 - 44	7.33	9.48
45 - 49	6.40	7.77
50 - 54	6.04	5.25
55 - 59	6.10	7.17
60 - 64	5.82	6.00
65 - 69	5.03	4.74
70 - 74	4.57	3.60
75 - 79	3.34	1.60
80 - 84	2.01	0.00
85 & up	0.93	0.00

The above data confirm that which has generally been accepted, i.e., library users do not represent a typical cross-section of the population.

5. (Frequency of Library Use)

Patrons were asked how frequently they had visited the library over the preceding months.



6. (Need for Library Services)

The first patron opinion question was now posed. Twenty-eight (28) different library services were listed. The patron was asked to indicate 'the need for each service to **you or members of your family.**

Public Library Services	Extremely High	High	Moderate	Low	Not At All
A. Reference/information					
B. Recreational reading					
C. Help with selecting library materials (Books, tapes, video-tapes, etc.)					
D. Children's programs					
E. Teenagers' programs					
F. Adult programs					
G. Senior citizens' programs					
H. In-depth research materials					
I. Phonograph records to circulate					
J. Audio cassettes to circulate					
K. Video cassettes to circulate					
L. Films to circulate					
M. Equipment to use with films, records, tapes					
N. Magazines					
O. Newspapers					
P. Bestsellers					
Q. Help with homework					
R. Help with reading skills					
S. Instruction in how to use the library					

T. Photocopiers					
U. Study/quiet space					
V. Community bulletin boards					
W. Meeting rooms					
X. Microcomputers for public use					
Y. Access to online databases					
Z. Assistance in borrowing materials from other libraries					
A1. Bookmobile service					
B1. Books-by-mail					
C1. Other _____					
D1. Other _____					

7. (Quality of Service)

Another facet of the same question was the rating of those services as to how well the patron's library provided them. The results for both questions 6 and 7 are:

PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES	Need Mean	Need Rank	Quality Mean	Quality Rank
Recreational reading	3.00	1	3.24	1
Reference/information	2.81	2	3.13	3
Bestsellers	2.73	3	3.15	2
Other, selection one	2.45	4	2.28	17
Magazines	2.33	5	2.99	5
In-depth research materials	2.18	6	2.58	12
Photocopiers	2.14	7	2.86	7
Help with selecting library materials	2.11	8	3.13	4
Study/quiet space	2.07	9	2.86	8
Newspapers	2.01	10	2.83	11
Other, selection two	1.97	11	2.22	18
Assistance in borrowing materials from other libraries	1.96	12	2.90	6
Adult programs	1.88	13	2.38	16
Children's programs	1.71	14	2.84	9
Community bulletin boards	1.62	15	2.45	14
Video cassettes to circulate	1.53	16	1.82	27
Help with homework	1.48	17	2.49	13
Instruction in how to use the library	1.44	18	2.84	10
Audio cassettes to circulate	1.40	19	1.97	24
Phonograph records to circulate	1.38	20	2.19	20
Teenagers' programs	1.33	21	2.18	21

Microcomputers for public use	**1.31**	**22**	**1.58**	**29**
Meeting rooms	**1.25**	**23**	**2.41**	**15**
Films to circulate	**1.24**	**24**	**2.05**	**23**
Equipment of use with films, records	**1.24**	**25**	**1.98**	**24**
Senior citizens' programs	**1.19**	**26**	**2.13**	**22**
Access to online databases	**1.18**	**27**	**1.46**	**30**
Help with reading skills	**1.11**	**28**	**2.20**	**19**
Bookmobile service	**0.95**	**29**	**1.95**	**26**
Books-by-mail	**0.94**	**30**	**1.82**	**28**

It may be of interest to the reader to compare the 'need' rank to the rankings given a similar list of actions by the librarians and trustees. (see **Librarians and Trustees** - question 4)

8. (Most Needed Services)

While question 6 asked each person to rate the perceived need for each service, the present question asked for an indication of the five, in priority order, for which the patron or patron's family had the greatest need.

The top five were:

Public Library Services	Number of Patrons Selecting	Rank
Reference/information	**969**	**1**
Recreational reading	**927**	**2**
Bestsellers	**572**	**3**
Magazines	**479**	**4**
Children's programs	**371**	**5**

9. (Services to Discontinue)

This question required a negative evaluation in that patrons were asked to identify three of the services for discontinuance if decreased federal funding forced reductions in public library spending. Since there was very little difference between the third, fourth, and fifth services selected for cutting, a total of five, not three, services appear in the table.

Public Library Services	Number of Patrons Selecting	Rank
Microcomputers for public use	**230**	**1**
Access to online databases	**227**	**2**
Phonograph records to circulate	**176**	**3**
Books-by-mail	**174**	**4**
Meeting Rooms	**172**	**5**
Community bulletin boards	**152**	**6**

10. (Federal Support and Statewide Benefits)

Listed in question 7 of the questionnaire sent to librarians and trustees are eleven activities supported in part by federal funds. Patrons were asked to rank the same activities as to their benefit to Alabama citizens, as librarians and trustees were so asked. A comparison of the opinions of all three groups is presented on the following page:

Federal Program Activity Areas	Patrons Mean/Rank	Trustees Mean/Rank	Librarians Mean/Rank
Services to physically handicapped	3.14 / 1	2.7 / 5	2.9 / 5
Expansion of services to areas	3.03 / 2	2.0 / 2	3.1 / 5
Services to persons who are economically, culturally, or disadvantaged	2.92 / 3	2.6 / 7	2.7 / 7
Building services to areas which	2.86 / 4	3.0 / 1	3.3 / 1
Services to library users over 60	2.77 / 5	2.8 / 3	2.9 / 4
Provision of statewide services by the State Library Agency	2.68 / 6	2.6 / 6	2.8 / 6
Provision of programs to help individuals with the inability to read, write or make simple math computation	2.66 / 7	2.4 / 8	2.7 / 8
Services to institutions	2.54 / 8	2.4 / 9	2.5 / 10
Development of large research libraries	2.42 / 9	2.4 / 10	2.6 / 9
Provision of info about and referrals to other community agencies & organizations	2.38 / 10	2.7 / 4	2.9 / 3
Expansion of services to people who have trouble with the English language	2.25 / 11	1.8 / 11	2.0 / 11

It will be noted that trustees and librarians agree with each other to a greater extent than either group does with patrons.

Conclusion:

The preceding tables and charts present a graphic synthesis of the opinions of 105 librarians, 73 trustees, and 1,766 library patrons. Their priorities for public library service in Alabama have been recorded. Knowledge of such opinions is vital to an enlightened decision-making process, where financial constraints, legislative pressures, social values and many other factors also converge in the planning process.